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# **The Female Memory Factory: How the Gendered Labour of Memory Creates Mnemonic Capital**

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## **Abstract**

Within feminist memory studies the economy has largely been overlooked, despite the fact that the economic analysis of culture and society have long featured in research on women and gender. This paper addresses that gap, arguing that the global economy matters in understanding the gender of memory and memories of gender. It models the conceptual basis for the consideration of a feminist economic analysis of memory that can reveal the dimensions of mnemonic transformation, accumulation and exchange through gendered mnemonic labour, gendered mnemonic value, and gendered mnemonic capital. The paper then applies the concepts of mnemonic labour and mnemonic capital in more detail through a case study of memory activism examining the work of The Parragirls and The Parramatta Female Factory Memory Project (PFFP) in Sydney, Australia. The campaigns have worked to recognize the memory and history of the longest continuous site of female containment in Australia built to support the British invasion. The site, which dates from the 1820s, was a female factory for transported convicts, a female prison, an asylum for women and girls, an

orphanage and then Parramatta Girls Home in Parramatta. The Burramattagal People of Darug Clan are the Traditional Owners of the land and the site is of practical and spiritual importance to indigenous women. This local struggle is representative of a global economic system of gendered institutionalized violence and forgetting. The analysis shows how the mnemonic labour of women survivors accumulates as mnemonic value that is then transformed into institutional mnemonic capital. Focusing on how mnemonic labour creates lasting mnemonic capital reveals the gendered dimensions of memory which are critical for on-going memory work.

## **Introduction**

A female convict, Judith Myers, transported from England in 1821, was incarcerated at the Parramatta Female Factory in Western Sydney, Australia. According to the Colonial records, Judith was fined for receiving ‘an excessive’ nine letters from her husband over six months (Reel 6052; 4/1751 pp.64-5). Was her husband’s love recorded in the labour of those letters? We will never know since the letters have been lost.<sup>i</sup>

This is a familiar story: feminist scholars have long shown how the cultural memory of women and girls has been lost, distorted and erased (Addams, 2002). Female ancestors are cut out of history through the patrilineal retention of the male surname with heterosexual marriage (King and Stone, 2010). Men’s lives are privileged in history books (Rowbottom, 1989) literature (Russ, 1983) and national cultures (Grever, 2003). The achievements of boys and men dominate public memories through artefacts and narratives within museums, memorials and commemorations (Paletschek, 2008; Jacobs, 2008). The mass media records, preserves and shares predominantly the images and voices of men and boys (Dubriwny and Poirot 2017).

What remains obscured with these examples and studies, however, is an understanding of how there is an economy to the workings of patriarchal memory. Whether asserting the right to retain a name; to generate a commemoration of women's suffrage, to change the list and create a gender equal list of scientists, to amplify and reinforce memories of abuse – all these mnemonic acts great and small require consciously controlling the means of remembering, the investment of daily mnemonic labour and accrual of mnemonic value to create long term and enduring mnemonic capital in various states. Thus, in the absence of artefacts of Judith Myers letters – what is it that remains with us and how might we understand the value of what remains?

This article builds on this journal's earlier discussions on gender and memory, particularly around colonial violence (Rydsom, 2014; Ephgrave, 2014; Ronikan, 1997) on gender and psychiatric institutionalization (Zavirsek, 2000) memories of sexual violence against women within social media (Hearn, 2018) and particularly the idea of biographical remembering as 'hard labour' (Inowlocki and Lutz, 2000)..This article extends these discussions by exploring the colonial gendered economy of memory at Australia's longest continuous site of female incarceration in Parramatta in Western Sydney. In particular, the research examines the mnemonic legacy of the site through the gendered labour of survivors and memory activists 'the Parragirls' to create mnemonic capital through Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project. (PFFP Memory Project)

Although the study is situated in one country, Australia, the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct is to be understood within a global colonial history. This involved the systematic institutional incarceration of women and girls in laundries, factories, orphanages and asylums by States and Churches with the collusion of multiple local actors and agents. The built environment, architectural design, policies, practices and systems of violence were similar, involving the removal of girls and women from their families and the removal of

babies and children from women; the stripping and banning of personal possessions and personal names; routinised methods of dehumanization and punishments; the systematic use of violence, and the sexual abuse and rape of girls and women by adults working in or having access to the institutions.

Dating from the 1820s and used continuously until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct is thus a significant place of struggle that illuminates personal and public memories of gendered intersectional colonial violence against women and girls in Australia (See Ashton and Wilson, 2014; ) as well as connecting to insights into the systemic abuse that took place in similar institutions in Ireland and Canada (See Pine, 2011; Smith, 2008). The complexities of the changing patriarchal functions and guises of the material legacy is digitally remembered by Parragirls on the PFFP Memory website:

Located about 3 klm north of Parramatta CBD on the upper reaches of the Parramatta River, the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct represents two adjacent historic sites. The earliest, the Parramatta Female Factory (1821-1847), was an assignment depot, prison and 'workhouse' for convict women. In 1836 funds were approved to build an orphanage for children of Catholic parents beside the Female Factory. Known as the Roman Catholic Orphan School (1843-1886) it is one of the earliest institutions associated with the Forgotten Australians ( See <https://www.pffpmemory.org.au/>)

The Female Factory at Parramatta was repurposed in 1847 as an Asylum for Lunatic and Invalid Convicts. After 1852 it began to take male as well as female patients and continued to operate as the Cumberland Hospital after 1993. The Roman Catholic Orphan school was repurposed in the 1880s as Parramatta Girl's Home and Industrial School. (<http://www.parragirls.org.au/parramatta-girls-home.php>). Despite campaigns by Bessie Guthrie and the Australian Women's Liberation Movement, as well as an Australian

Broadcasting Corporation in the documentary 'This Day Tonight' (1973) highlighting abuse, Parramatta Girl's Home continued to operate until 1983 albeit with another name change (Bellamy, 1996). Girls were kept with no personal possessions, they were systematically beaten, they were sexually abused and raped (see Djuric, 2011). The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2014-17) has publicly recorded evidence of the punishments and abuses that took place within rigid dehumanizing regime

The precinct land chosen in the 1820s by colonizers on which to build the original Female Factory belongs to the indigenous Burramattagal People of the Darug Clan and is of practical and spiritual importance to indigenous women. It was the perfect birthing site where the Parramatta River with its fresh water meets the sea that flows in from Sydney harbor and was where the Darug Clan women over generations labored to give birth. The site is therefore of continuous historic significance for around 60,000 years prior to the British invasion of Australia: it has multi-layered gendered memories for indigenous women as well as being a critical part of Australia and the UK's brutal colonial past as well as within women's living memories.

The land of the site though, situated in Western Sydney, one of Australia's fastest growing regions, is worth a great deal of money. The buildings were threatened with demolition and sale with proposed plans in 2013 to turn it into a commercial district to encourage enterprise and tourism in the areas (Clarke, 2014). The Parramatta City urban redevelopment plans ignored the mnemonic and heritage value of the site and if they had gone ahead they would have erased Australia's longest continuous site of female containment. Parragirls, women who had been at Parramatta Girl's home in the 1970s and 1980s who had been campaigning for recognition of abuse at the site, then launched the Parramatta Female Factory Memory Project (PFFP) as response. This memory activist campaign works with artists, historians, curators and journalists to have the site recognized

by the New South Wales Government and Parramatta City Council as a site of significant national heritage. Their struggle is to raise awareness and public memory of the site, campaigning for a formal education centre, linking their work to the global network the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience:

Apologies, stone memorials and trauma tourism no longer suffice for those living with the consequences of serious abuse. We urgently need a new imaginary for our past, where we make use of Australian heritage to do justice. (Drujic, Hibberd and Steele, 2018).

The PFFP memory project uses multiple forms of creative and imaginative activist memory work both on-line and off-line to preserve the built heritage, access archives, create on-line resources of personal testimony, therapeutic support whilst also mobilizing public memory, providing for example public testimony to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2014).

Copies of colonial records, listing women such as Judith Myers, cited at the beginning of this article, were held up by Parragirls during a docu-protest I took part in at Parramatta, Western Sydney in 2012. The dialogue was compelling: a colonial list of silent names held up in front of buildings threatened with demolition by the local council connected through the mnemonic labour of the stories of the Parragirls. The docu-protest was one of many activities of the group that have since led to the site being recognized as a site of National Heritage in 2017. I cite the example of Judith Myers and the uneven global-digital or what elsewhere I have coined as the ‘globital’ memory trace (Reading, 2016) of her life at Paramatta Female Factory in Sydney Australia because the labour behind her memory and understanding its value matters to the on-going work of feminist memory activism and to the gender of memory and memories of gender. I build on the conceptual framework of the global-digital or ‘globital’ memory field from my earlier work (2016) because it is the only feminist

analysis of cultural memory that includes not only a basis for understanding the economy of memory but how that is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century articulated through the combination of digitization and globalization. Indeed, despite feminists long advocating that the economy as key to understanding patriarchy within global-digital capitalism, the mnemonic economy has largely been overlooked within memory studies and feminist memory studies.

This paper in a modest way attempts to address those gaps I develop a blueprint for a conceptual basis for the consideration of a gendered economic analysis of memory in terms of how a feminist economic mnemonic ontology might be configured around three dimensions of gendered labour, gendered value, and gendered capital. The paper briefly models how mnemonic labour creates mnemonic capital in more detail through the example of women's memory activism linked to the Parramatta Female Factory site called The Parramatta Female Factory Memory Project (PFFP). Activists have worked for decades and more formally through the PFFP since 2013 to have the Parramatta Female Factory site in Parramatta, Western Sydney, Australia preserved and transformed into a heritage site to archive and communicate women's stories and experiences of the violence of colonialism.

The site of the Parramatta Female Factory and the memory activism of the PFFP which I thread through this article provides grounded illustrations of how understanding the economic dimensions of memory work illuminates the gendering of memory and memories of gender. The Parramatta Female Factory site and mnemonic labour by Parragirls and the PFFP demonstrates the gendered economies of remembering and what happens when women seize the means of remembering. Focusing on the domain of mnemonic capital and mnemonic labour also reveals the how memory work has a global reach: beyond a seemingly local struggle, feminist activist memory work is representative of a global nexus of material and energetic colonial and post-colonial commodity chains.



The article begins by developing a feminist framework for understanding the economy of memory, outlining in more detail the concepts of gendered mnemonic labour, mnemonic value and mnemonic capital before modelling how these work within the Paramatta Female Factory site.

### **Memory and the Economy**

Mathew Allen points out that both memory and the economy ‘share unique historical correspondence and conflation in ways that continue to be felt for shaping and affecting our social lives’ (2016: 371). Despite this, there is a dearth of detailed conceptual work on the economies of memory, although as Allen shows, some memory scholars reference the language of the economy (Allen, 2014: 12). The term ‘the political economy’ is, for example, used in Robyn Autry’s work as ‘a framework’ to explain the particular material and fiscally driven processes that shape the ideological production of exhibitions (Autry, 2013). The idea that there is ‘hard labour’ involved in the personal memory work required in the process of migration has also been discussed within this journal by Lena Inowlocki and Helme Lutz on Turkish women biographies in Germany. The work of performance and theatre is conceptualized by Emilie Pine as a memory marketplace. Pine examines examples of theatre plays in Ireland and internationally to show how theatre produces memory through the text, along with the labour of the theatre audience. (2019)

Bringing questions of the economy into feminist studies of gender and memory allows for new kinds of interventions into memory debates, including the on-going debate as to why women’s lives and women’s histories continue to be forgotten and erased. Bringing in the economy is, nonetheless, a difficult intellectual move, as Allen notes, ‘Too often, the status of memory is deemed to be too personal, or collectively too sacred, to attend to the dirt of capital under the fingernails of its gravediggers and memorial masons’ (Allen, 2016). In his

earlier book, *The Labour of Memory* Allen argues that remembrance requires work defined not in the narrow sense of formal waged labour, but in terms of the various activities involved in the ‘direction and application of material and immaterial resources and capacities to the production and reproduction for achieving remembrance’ (Allen, 2016, p.xx.). The conceptual work developed here differs significantly from Allen’s, however, in that I seek to demonstrate how the lens of political economy can reveal how capitalist patriarchy (de) values memories of gender and the gender of memory and in turn what it is that feminist memory activists do to create lasting mnemonic value for the future.

The article builds on earlier work of mine that has sought to examine gender and memory through the economy of unevenly globalized digital technologies suggesting that these may be considered as ‘a global memory field’ within which humans are born, live and die, generating memories which penetrate the human body (through medical technologies) and which reach to the farthest reaches of the universe (through astrophysical technologies that can hear, see and record the making of black hole, or the birth of planet). Previously, I have shown how the gendered process of remembering from the intimacies of parenting to the witnessing of atrocities in public spaces to the production and consumption of digital feminist memories has been radically changed through and by our immersed but uneven access to and use of connective digital technologies, across the public and private domains.(Reading, 2016). In addition, several articles have examined in more depth the economies of digital memory (Reading, 2014; Reading and Notley, 2015; Reading and Notley, 2017) This article extends that work to explore the value chain within the economies of remembering and how this operates through gender. To provide the foundations for this we must conceptually weave together insights from the intersections of research on gender, memory and global economy.

## **Gender, Memory and the Economy**

There is long established line of research that focusses on gender and memory (Haug, 1987; Henderson, 2006; Hirsh and Smith, 2002; Hirsch and Spitzer, 2006, Keightley, 2014) or which brings gender firmly into the analytical framework (Rothberg 2009; Radstone, 2007) Yet while studies of memory more broadly have established how memory is globalized (Assman, 2010)) travelling (Erll, 2011), transcultural (Rapson and Bond, 2014) and connected (Hoskins, 2011) most explicit gendered memory work, unpacks cultural memories in terms of discursive practices within specific national analytical frameworks with little reference to memory's transformations, mobilizations or globalized economic contexts (See for example, Chidgey, 2015; Chowanec and Philips, 2012; Hanley, 1991; Paletschek, 2008). Even non-Western studies tend to be configured through national methodologies and frames of analysis but with little reference to the broader political economy (Kassem, 2011; Neguib, 2009; Soh, 2009; Didur, 2006).

Yet, global economic and cultural processes are characterized by both transformations and continuities which are uneven within nations, regions, communities and household units (Albrow and King, 1990; Giddens, 1996, Held, 1999). Part of these transformations and continuities clearly concern gender and, thus gendered memories, with globalization consolidating established inequalities as well as creating new kinds of opportunities, as Petersen argues:

Men, especially those who are economically, ethnically and racially privileged, continue to dominate institutions of authority and power worldwide...But globalisation is also disrupting gendered patterns by altering conventional beliefs, roles, livelihoods and political practices worldwide" (Petersen, 2005: 507).

Within analyses of the economy, questions of labour, capital and value are axiomatic. Yet, within global-digital or 'global' capitalism gender inequalities are configured through the

value given not only to paid labour but also to the lack of value given to reproductive and unpaid labour. As historic Marxist work such as Frederick Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1995) and August Bebel in *Woman and Socialism* (2011) sought to show, women's reproductive labour is a crucial but largely overlooked dimension of capitalism<sup>ii</sup>. In her analyses of gender and the economy Sheila Rowbottom in 'Hidden from History' argues:

Capitalism brought new relationships of property and domination. It brought into being a class which did not own the means of production, 'free' labourers who had to sell their labour power on the market. It started to dissolve all previous forms of ownership. But men still owned their women body and soul long after they themselves ceased to be the property of other men. ...Patriarchy, the power of men as a sex to dispose of women's capacity to labour, especially in the family, has not had a direct and simple relationship to class exploitation. (Rowbottom, 1973, ix)

Feminists also showed how the concept of labour was biased in not giving value to women's unpaid work in the family and household unit. Hence, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (2014) argued in 1898 that the work of cooking and cleaning in the household should be removed and made part of paid industrialized labour. Second Wave feminists in the 1970s and 1980s argued for the expansion of the concept of labour to include the reproductive work of women (Weeks, 2007) with studies that examined the affective qualities of industrial labour (Hochschild 1983/2003). Despite this, as Marilyn Waring shows, the UN's definition of economic activity continues to ignore the work of women particularly in developing countries (Waring, 2009: 58-9).

The capitalist-patriarchal economy requires not only immaterial direct labour – cooking, cleaning, reproduction (Fortunati, 2007) but is also supported through the work of social

reproduction which includes women's labour in the education of, socialization of and communication with the next generation (Fortunati, 1995). What is missing in Fortunati's list of the economy and social reproduction, however, is recognition of the *work of memory* with the labour of remembering and forgetting involving both immaterial direct labour as well as the work of mnemonic reproduction both publicly and in the family or household unit and society

How then might we use an economic lens to develop analytical tools to understand the gendered work of memory.?

### **Mnemonic Labour and Mnemonic Value**

First, the feminist mnemologist<sup>iii</sup> for a gendered economic analysis of memory requires a working concept of mnemonic labour, mnemonic value and mnemonic capital. This involves recognition of the accumulation of the value of memory work, including the labour of dealing with everyday trauma, the labour of everyday remembering and forgetting, the labour of truth-telling and witnessing, as well as the labour of public memory work such as archiving, writing history books, designing monuments and commemorations.

In a labour theory of value, 'value' is generally understood as the result of the labour required to make the commodity or to carry out the service. Karl Marx observed, however, that within a capitalist system, workers are not paid for the full economic value of the goods or services they produce, but only a proportion. And, as we have already established the capitalist economy also requires the unpaid (re) productive labour of the family or 'household unit'. There is, by extension, a gender gap in terms of the (mnemonic) value given to all labour conducted by women. Women's labour worldwide is routinely undervalued in relation to that of men, resulting in a gender pay gap and other anomalies of economic inequality. One objective more broadly for the study of the gendered economy of memory then is to analyze

and address any gender gap in relation to the value given to memories of and by women in different contexts.

For example, research on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone shows that the international drive to set up Commissions that require people to tell stories about abuses and atrocities means that ‘truth telling’ has become a form of exploited unpaid labour used by Western NGOs working to the particular objectives of a Commission seeking to establish Western values of capitalist democracy (Allegralab, 2015) Thus, the *labour* of truth telling, a central feature now of Truth Commissions globally, would hitherto not be recognized as labour or indeed *mnemonic labour* yet it most certainly contributes to a regime of *mnemonic value* that is accumulated to form part of the *memory capital* of any emergent post-dictatorship or post-conflict government with its particular gendered inequalities and dimensions. Indeed, Annie Coombes (2011) in her memory work observing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa discovered that while men would publicly talk about their own experiences of being violated or abused, women would rarely give testimony about their own experiences of sexual violence. Instead women’s truth telling would bear witness to the stories and experiences of others.

Recognizing the labour of memory and what kinds of value are accrued in these circumstances can help reveal the gendered contradictions of memory work. Such inequalities of the relationships between gendered mnemonic labour and mnemonic capital has important consequences in terms of what Paul Gready and Simon Robins have called ‘transformative justice’ (2018) <sup>iv</sup>. While the emphasis by peace-makers and international bodies may be to create or mobilize symbolic capital (commemorative acts, memorialization) to make up for past wrongs it is in our model also necessary to recognize the often hidden or unpaid gendered and affective mnemonic labour that is required in the rebuilding of post-conflict

societies with difficult pasts and in so doing to enable deeper kinds of gendered transformations.

In addition, performance scholar Jen Harvie (2013) shows how digitization provides for new forms of labour in relation to the theatre and culture, which chimes with the ways in which digital media scholars highlight how unpaid labour is harnessed by capitalism to make profits out of social media users leisure-work (Scholtz, 2013; Terranova 2013; Huws, 2014) as well as the exploitation within ‘digital capitalism’ (Schiller, 1999) within ICT mineral extraction and multi-national electronics and software production (Fuchs, 2014). Any theory of mnemonic labour and value in the globalized digital age thus requires recognition of the unpaid labour involved with mobile and social media use for the production and mobilization of personal memories and public memories.

There is also the gendered immaterial labour of remembering that is taken for granted within the household unit – the handing down of public history to offspring; the curation of family memories, histories and genealogies as well as mundane memory work crucial to the household or familial units affective modulation, smooth administration and social (re) production: the location of every sock, book, mobile phone and children’s toy as well as remembering birthdays, anniversaries and bread and milk for tea. It all takes time, energy and effort. All that domestic memory work adds value.

Any theory of *mnemonic labour and value* thus needs to recognize that there are different scales and domains of mnemonic labour, that men and women may labour but to different ends; that women may, as with other labour (social and biological social reproduction) do mnemonic work that is non-economic, unpaid, unseen or unrecognized, yet which contributes to the accumulation of mnemonic value and mnemonic capital.

## **Mnemonic Capital**

This section sets out how mnemonic labour directly or indirectly creates the value that accumulates as states of mnemonic capital. The cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu argues that capital is the materialized form of ‘accumulated labour’ (1986: 81). By extension then mnemonic capital is the materialized form of accumulated mnemonic labour: the labour of the curator, the director, the archivist may be said to accumulate the mnemonic capital of the museum for example. Yet, this misses other forms of mnemonic reproduction, immaterial mnemonic labour, and what Fortunati characterizes as other regimes of value (Fortunati, 1995). As Bourdieu contends, capital is not always monetized: there are other forms of non-monetised capital including social and cultural capital. It would be more accurate therefore not to simply extend the concept of monetized capital to gendered memory work and accumulation but rather it would be more applicable and useful to extend Bourdieu’s idea of the concept of cultural capital to build our concept of *mnemonic capital*.

By extension *mnemonic capital* can be understood as the accumulation of value arising from mnemonic labour – this includes both the labour of remembering but also the labour by societies and individuals to forget. Mnemonic capital takes on various materialized states which are not necessarily fiscal or monetized, though they may become so (Reading and Notley, 2017). Bourdieu suggests three states of cultural capital: embodied cultural capital, objectified cultural capital and institutionalized cultural capital. Gendered mnemonic capital, by extension, I would suggest, can take four possible states which are transformed, exchanged and accumulated through mnemonic labour. These states include *embodied mnemonic capital*, *objectified mnemonic capital*, *institutional mnemonic capital* and *environmental mnemonic capital*. The first, embodied mnemonic capital, concerns memories held within the (human) body – the woman’s mindful body that physically remembers the rape, as well as the woman’s embodied mind who remembers but can’t narrate what



happened; through the work – the labour of telling of herstory this *embodied memory capital* may be transformed into *objectified mnemonic capital* (a letter, a diary) but it might also be transformed with further memory work or labour from private to public institutionalized testimony to form *institutional mnemonic capital* that can mobilise justice and restitution.

Finally there is *environmental mnemonic capital*: this is the wider human modified ecosphere. This includes labour related to and the accrued mnemonic value of the planet including the earth's oceans, mountains, species as well the moon and energy from the wider solar system (Notley and Reading, 2017). The production of objective and institutional mnemonic capital, as I suggest at the end of this article, may destroy or at the very least irrevocably alter environmental mnemonic capital.

The woman's labour of memory if it accrues enough surplus value will thus accrue surplus value as mnemonic capital in various forms - archives, books, artefacts, albums, buildings, ruins. The different states of mnemonic capital may vary in terms of mnemonic value and power within capitalism. Embodied mnemonic capital may hold value only for a lifetime, though with labour it may be passed on and embodied by another, or, transformed into other states of mnemonic capital. The value of mnemonic capital in objectified form may last for several generations, but it too can be destroyed as with Judith Myers letters and the belongings of other women incarcerated or 'contained' within the institutions at the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct. What takes the greatest labour of memory and has the greatest longevity and indeed public value within capitalist patriarchy is *institutional mnemonic capital* (the family, schools, the law, museums, states).

This concept of gendered mnemonic capital can then illuminate the workings of patriarchal memory within unevenly articulated global-digital or *globital* capitalism, revealing the different ways in which mnemonic authority and value are generated through and become transformed across different states of mnemonic capital. For example, feminist

economic theory shows that fiscal capital is predominantly held and concentrated into the hands of corporations predominantly owned by men (Ferber and Nelson, 2003) But Corrine Seals in a study of discourse shows that institutionalized and embodied mnemonic capital are deployed in women's and men's discourse significantly varies and determines the value accorded to their statements by others and their consequent 'memorability'. Seals shows how embodied capital in discourse concerns personal opinions and life experiences. In contrast, institutional capital in discourse is that which comes from an established source such as a news programme or research. (Seals, 2015). Seals found that women tend to use embodied capital first to establish themselves within a conversation, whereas men tend to use institutional capital. We might then relate this not to biological differences in how we deploy knowledge or mnemonic capital but rather to the daily mnemonic impoverishment that women experience as result of mnemonic institutions that routinely marginalize women's roles (Winter, 2012: 162). Add to the absence of mnemonic capital of women's pasts and lives in journalism, in literature, in education systems worldwide, then it is hardly surprising that such institutional mnemonic poverty means women use embodied capital first to establish ourselves in conversation.

From this example then we might ask how is mnemonic capital in its four states – embodied, objectified, institutional and environmental - accumulated, transformed and exchanged? And how do feminist agents of memory (survivors, journalists, curators, archivists, academics) seek to address this? What happens when women seek to mobilise the mnemonic capital of women in museums for example? <sup>v</sup> In the case of the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct memory project and the memory work related to this, how and in what ways are different states of capital accumulated and transformed into memories with value that result in enduring public memorability?

## **Parramatta Female Factory Memory Project**

In 2006 Parragirls was established by survivors of the Parramatta Girls Home to promote ‘awareness about the history, heritage and legacy of the Parramattta Female Factory Precinct and its historic institutions’ (<http://www.parragirls.org.au/parragirls.php>). The Parragirls group provides support and contacts by and for women survivors of the Parramatta Girls Home that operated on the site until 1974 renamed as Taldree Children’s Shelter until 1983 and more broadly acts as contact point for Forgotten Australians and the Stolen Generations. The memory work by Parragirls led to survivor and activist Bonney Djuric, founding the Parramatta Female Factory Memory Project (PFFP Memory Project) in 2013 which continues to work for recognition and preservation of the site using contemporary art, social history and memory activism to be recognized as a site of world conscience. (<https://www.pffpmemory.org.au/>) Examining more closely the work of Parragirls and the PFFP reveals how mnemonic labour through feminist memory activism creates lasting mnemonic capital in states that impact on public consciousness. Within the scope of this essay I focus on several discrete examples.

Around 25, 000 women convicts were forcibly moved to Australia from the UK during the period of transportations from 1787 up until 1868 having been convicted of crimes, usually poverty-related theft and prostitution. When the women arrived in Australia they were sent to one of 12 female ‘factories’ (Henrikson, Liston, and Cowley, 2008) undated, 7) Based on an earlier female bridewells, prisons and workhouses in England that criminalized poor women (Dabhoiwala, 2006), in Australia the factories used the labour of the women to spin wool and flax, to sew and knit stockings, pick oakum and break rocks. Gay (Hendriksen, Liston and Cowley, 2008).

Around 15-20 percent of Australians are descendants or related to women who were kept under state ‘care’ in the Parramatta Female Factory and the institutions that took its

place over almost two hundred years as Australia's longest continuous site of female 'containment'. (Henrikson and Liston, 2008, 7). Convict women were selected for transportation because of their reproductive potential (ie they were of childbearing age and would thus add children and more potential labourers) and they would add economic value through their expertise in one of 180 trades (Henrikson and Liston, 2008 p. 8)

Yet as with so much of the public memory of women's history Parramatta Female Factory and the subsequent uses of the site for female containment – a Lunatic Asylum, an Orphanage - was largely forgotten within public memory. The concept of mnemonic capital enables a broad understanding of the gendered mnemonic landscape and shows how activist memory work makes a difference.

There is a dearth of institutional mnemonic capital related to the site: while UNESCO's World Heritage list includes eleven Australian convict sites and lists the Cascades Female Factory in Hobart, Tasmania (Unesco, 2018) Paramatta Female Factory - Australia's longest continuous site of female containment was omitted (Grunseit, 2013). In terms of women's 'objectified mnemonic capital' - moveable artefacts – clothing, letters, pots and pans, and other personal items nearly all were lost or destroyed: 'there is less than a dozen objects identified as made or used by factory women at the time they were in the factory' (Henrikson and Liston, 2008 , 26). There has been no archeological dig (Henrikson and Liston, 2008 , 26). What remains is the land and the site itself with its remains of numerous buildings, the colonial lists of inmates which have since been digitised, of the Colonial Government,) and, crucially, the embodied memory capital of women survivors from Parramatta Girl's Home closed down in 1974 and Taldree Children's Centre closed in . 1983. While parts of the site remained in use by the social services until the 1990s, much of the site fell into dereliction and was largely inaccessible. Then in 2013 Parramatta North

Urban Transformation proposed that the site with its associated heritage should face demolition.

However, as a counterpoint to this, there was already the accumulated value of women survivors who had labored privately with horrific memories over decades and who then came together in 2003 in a reunion: through this they put their mnemonic labour together and formed. Through Parragirls they accumulated further mnemonic capital with a major transformation in 2013 with the establishment of the Parramatta Female Factory Memory Project (PFFP). The PFFP worked to promote the memory and knowledge about the site in terms of the history and heritage of institutionalized women and children in Australia; PFFP activist work and mnemonic labour brought in a wider community of labour – of academics and artists, working together through workshops, docu-protests, events, presentations and tours. These accumulated new kinds of memory capital objectivized as an extensive website, numerous exhibitions, books, and academic articles. The labour has, furthermore, accumulated value in the state of institutional recognition: in November 2017 the site was included in Australia's National Heritage List (Australian Government Department of Environment and Energy, 2018). Buildings designated as core heritage sites are being repaired and there is archeological testing. The longer-term goal of the PFFP, building on this institutional and objective memory capital, is to accumulate further value to create environmental mnemonic capital which would involve the transformation of the buildings and land into a permanent memory site, a commemorative space and 'keeping place'. (Parramatta Female Factory Memory Project, 2018) <sup>vi</sup>. At the time of writing 200 years since the laying of the foundation stone at the site led to a memorial structure being unveiled on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

While the whole Parramatta Female Factory Precinct elicits many examples of the gendered economy of memory work, analytically it is illuminating to use the tools of

mnemonic labour and capital to reveal the mnemonic value of two particular elements that the women are laboring to transform into environmental mnemonic capital. The first is a stone and brick-built perimeter wall. When I first saw this wall on the site I didn't notice anything different or particularly special about it: it was simply to my mind a perimeter wall of containment. Yet Bonney Drujic, a survivor of the Girl's Home and founder of the PFFP drew on her embodied memory capital testifying to those of us gathered for the Docu-protest that if you looked closely you could see the wall was made of different coloured courses of bricks in different patterns. She explained that every time there was a riot or protest in the Parramatta Girls Home the girls as a punishment and as a process of ever greater 'containment' were forced to build the perimeter wall a course of bricks higher. The accumulation of their physical unpaid labour wrought through violence and containment is manifested in the objectified remaining mnemonic value of the wall (Djuric, 2013). Bonney Drujic's investment of her embodied memory capital along with the PFFP's mnemonic labour will accumulate such that the wall's value will be transformed into mnemonic institutionalized capital as part of what is planned to be the site's Education Centre.

The second element of mnemonic value and currently off limits to the public is a room marked on maps simply as a store room. Many girls were taken to the store room which was known by the girls who were in the Catholic Girls Home up until the 1990s as 'The Dungeon'. In the Dungeon, Bonney Djuric recalled in the Docu-Protest, girls were subjected to physical abuse, sexual assault and repeated rape. Many girls while they were incarcerated in the Dungeon used what means they could to graffiti the walls with their names and the date they were held captive there. The accumulation of the girls' labour may have gone unnoticed: it has no 'monetary' value but its huge mnemonic value was embodied by the women survivors who then laboured to highlight and accrue public objectified and institutional mnemonic value. Photographs of the walls were used as evidence to corroborate

claims that girls were there when they stated they were. Photographs of the graffiti on the Dungeon walls was also added to women's testimonies for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 26<sup>th</sup> February-3<sup>rd</sup> March in 2014. Letters showing reports of abuse over decades, as well as the photos showing the girls imprisonment in the Dungeon have been digitized and made publicly available. (For an example of a photograph, see Robb, 2006)

The mnemonic value of the testimony is thus an accumulation from the earlier unseen and unpaid labour of the girls graffitied mnemonic record, then added to by the labour of the survivors, the PFFP, the photographer as well as the labour of the records and judgements involved in judicial process for the Royal Commission in 2014.

Consequently, what the survivors are currently working for is that their embodied knowledge and mnemonic labour with its accumulated objectified value should be transformed into the permanent preservation of the buildings, including the Dungeon and for the entire site to be fully recognized as an International Site of Conscience. The survivors and the PFFP continue the work of remembering, investing their personal *embodied mnemonic capital* (their personal memories, their stories, the violence done to their bodies) to create enduring and powerful longer term mnemonic capital – in its various other states – *objectified mnemonic capital* (archives, books, artefacts, albums, buildings, ruins) *institutional mnemonic capital* (family, schools, museums, states) and *environmental mnemonic capital* (the land, geology and ecosystem of the place) which they seek to be brought together for the education of the public in a future Heritage and Education Centre.

## Conclusion

I began this paper with the story of Judith Myers, a female convict transported from England, who was incarcerated in 1821 at the Parramatta Female Factory in Western Sydney. We will

never read the letters that were written and exchanged between her and her husband: we will never know, were they excessive in their frequency, in their language, in their length, in their love? Yet, through the concepts outlined here, what we might now be able to understand is the value of what remains: what is left to us may not be Judith Myers objectified mnemonic capital in the form of her letters but rather what remains is the objective memory capital arising from the labour of an anonymous colonial scribe whose daily work was to record the ‘crimes’ and names of female inmates. These women’s names and records of their ‘crimes’ were then preserved and became part of the mnemonic capital of the British Empire preserved in one of the Colonial Secretary’s files (Reel 6052; 4/1751 pp.64-5). The accrued value of the scribe’s labour created the file, but this value was in-turn added to further through the anonymous labour of the archival team required to digitize the file. This value was also added to further through the hidden labour within global digital infrastructures and the unseen and forgotten labour in the longer commodity chain necessary to make digital memory with digital hardware. It is the accumulation of these labours that provide a public trace of the person who was Judith Myers. There is also of course the mnemonic labour of this academic article, of my research, thinking, writing, as a feminist mnemologist who seeks to create further objectified memory capital around the life of one forgotten convict, Judith Myers, and the memories of the Female Factory and subsequent institutions that incarcerated girls and women at Parramatta, Australia. All that accumulated value of all that located historic and dispersed digital labour results in minute traces of gendered capital - memories of institutionalized structural violence, invasion and systematic abuse, as well as one unknown female convict’s love’s labours’ lost.

This article has developed a conceptual basis for a gendered economic analysis of memory to enable us to begin to understand how mnemonic transformation, accumulation and exchange



is related to gendered mnemonic labour, gendered mnemonic value, and gendered mnemonic capital in different states. The article then briefly modelled an example of mnemonic labour value and mnemonic capital in more detail through an example of memory activism developed by Parragirls called The Parramatta Female Factory Memory Project (PFFP Memory Project) in Australia. I sought to illustrate how the mnemonic labour of survivors, activists and academics related to the site is being accumulated in the restitutorial struggle to have Australia's longest continuous site of historic female "containment" recognized as a site of world conscience. Using the conceptual tools of gendered mnemonic capital and mnemonic labour reveals new dimensions of gendered memory which are critical for on-going feminist memory work.

This short paper on gender and the memory economies has sought to develop new concepts to empower future memory work by feminists. Integrating insights from political economy into gendered memory analyses can provide new insights beyond those already developed within the field of Memory Studies and Feminist Memory Studies in particular.

Understanding the value chain of the mnemonic economy and the significance of the value of mnemonic labour within global patriarchal capitalism will provide important leverage for heritage and memory activists involved in other restitutorial campaigns.

This analysis points to the importance of feminists owning and controlling the means of remembering. The means of remembering as the work of the PFFP Memory Project highlights is certainly provided with more affordances in the global age. Mobile technologies and globally networked memories enable greater possibilities for women and feminists to capture, create, mobilise and archive memories of gender and gendered memories that support and promote equality. The PFFP Memory Project has made extensive use of digital technologies not only through its website and associated activities but also through a Virtual Reality heritage project documenting the site (Neutze, 2017)

However, while it is true that the digitization of archives or websites and other digital means such as Virtual Reality may enable memory activists to accrue objectified and institutionalized mnemonic capital in ways that can make a difference, these are not outside of capitalist global-digital supply chains. Feminist memory agents are implicated through our uses of them. Our digital gadgets and digital technologies require rare earths, gold and other metals. The industrial scale mining of these is destroying ancient sites of environmental memory with gendered significance. Many Rock Art sites in Australia were produced using ochre mined by indigenous women with much paleolithic cave art that was women's work (Power, 2004; Nuwer, 2013). Enduring sacred women's sites are being destroyed by the commodity chains necessary for digital memory (Creative Spirits, 2018). At the other end of the supply chain our digital devices become E-Waste much of which is exported from the Global North to the Global South where it is processed by some of the world's poorest women and children (McAllistair, Magee and Hale. 2014). Their work exposes them to persistent toxic substances that affect women's mortality and morbidity as well as their fertility (McAllistair, Magee and Hale. 2014). A summary of twenty three epidemiological studies in South East China showed that women's reproductive labour is seriously compromised by the global north's thirst for mnemonic technologies with 'spontaneous abortions, stillbirths, and premature births, and reduced birthweights and birth lengths associated with exposure to e-waste.' (Grant, Goldizen, Sly, Neira, van den Berg, Norman, 2013e 350). The accumulation of objectified and institutionalized mnemonic capital for some will be at the cost of others. The mnemonic economy of the global age with its toxic epidemiological impact results in a hidden workload not only in terms of women's reproductive labour but also for the subsequent everyday embodied labour of remembering and forgetting that some women must then perform to deal with their own on-going reproductive trauma and loss.

Under capitalist patriarchy, we remain implicated mnemonic agents. And so, when and where-ever feminists seize the means of remembering it should be with the caveat that our mnemonic labour should seek to give value – mnemonic capital - to remember those who may not have the means themselves.

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<sup>i</sup> The stamping out of women's communication in the form of letter writing and receipt is cited as one of the 'advantages' of incarcerating women in a similar Female Factory established during the same period in Tasmania "Farewell now to idleness and impudence, lover-letter writing, throwing of packets &c. over the wall, and all the concomitants of clandestine taking and receiving." *Hobart Town Courier* on 7 February 1829 Cited. <https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/index.php/convict-institutions/female-factories/cascades-ff>

<sup>ii</sup> For further examples of Marxist feminist work see: Fraser, Clara. *Revolution, She Wrote*. Red Letter Press, 1998. Hennessy, Rosemary, ed. *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives*. Routledge, 1997. Holmstrom, Nancy, ed. *The Socialist Feminist Project: A Contemporary Reader in Theory and Politics*. Monthly Review Press, 2002. Lenin, V.I. *The Emancipation of Women*. International Publishers, 1969 Martin, Gloria. *Socialist Feminism: The First Decade, 1966-76*. Freedom Socialist Publications, 1978.

<sup>iii</sup> Mnemologist - my neologism - the subject specialist equivalent of the biologist, the historian or sociologist. The mnemologist studies and researches memory and/ conducts social and cultural memory work.

<sup>iv</sup> Paul Gready and Simon Robyns (2018) argue that transitional justice fails to remove structural inequalities (such as gender inequalities) that were at the root of violence, dictatorship and war. Transformative justice seeks not simple restitution but transformation of societies.

<sup>v</sup> Some interesting examples include Southern Women's Museum, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam which is dedicated to women's experiences of war acts as a cultural women's centre and the Museum of Women in Aarhus, Denmark.

<sup>vi</sup> For the full objectives of the PFFP see <https://www.pffpmemory.org.au/about>.